

IATEFL ASSOCIATES DAY LIVERPOOL 2004

REPORT



Notes on Ana Falcao's talk by Sara Hannam, Thessaloniki, Greece

Ana presented her research into the area of teaching associations (TA's) and asked how we can understand the different perceptions of their function and purpose, deriving from both within and outside our profession.

Ana outlined that there are varying ideas with regard to what the function of TA's is, not all of them positive. She has found, when analyzing mainstream teacher development materials, that many key publications do not mention TA's at all and cited the reason as being that they '(do) not fit in to any established discipline, nor (do they) deliver a specified body of knowledge' (Edelfelt, 1989).

Ana distributed a variety of quotations on the subject of TA's and asked the members of the group to work on specifying factors arising from the quotes in terms of a clearer definition of what TA's actually do. The audience indicated they would like to have access to an electronic copy of the quotations.

The following points arose from the discussion, as identified by the group:

- Enhance professional status
- Promote personal development and development of colleagues
- Assist in opening windows of opportunity
- Help teachers grow and remain at the cutting edge
- Help teachers network
- Protect our profession
- Link up with the wider ELT world

Ana pointed out (and the group agreed) that although many people join TA's, they may not be aware of the stress involved in organizing things at the level of the board or committee, as things are mostly done on a voluntary basis.

Ana identified the following key points as important functions (and aims) of TA's:

- We create task forces and committees
- We sponsor training
- We sponsor professionals
- We have committed and skilled officers
- We have **truthful** members **** it was agreed to change this to** trusting or trustworthy
- We disseminate information
- We foster educational change and reform
- We influence educational policies
- We are a platform for publishers
- We relate to Continuing Professional Development

Ana then raised a number of issues arising which were left open for the group to consider individually. She believed these issues to be of importance to any organization functioning as a voluntary TA. They were:

- What have you learned by being a volunteer leader? What are the benefits?
- What can be done to break the one-off event cycle?
- Do you know what volunteerism is about? Do our members know we are volunteers running a voluntary organization?

- How can we progress towards more formalization without losing the benefits of informal management?

The group thanked Ana for her interesting and insightful presentation.

Notes on Jeremy Jacobson & Sabiha Mansoor's talk by Fatma Ataman

The session started with Jeremy Jacobson introducing the aims of ELTeCs. Then the TA's were directed to the related web site: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/english/eltecs/> where all the details can be reached. TA's are encouraged to submit ELTeCs bid to get financial support for the projects designed to foster networking between ELT professionals on a regional and cross-border basis.

Following Jeremy's presentation, Sabiha Mansoor, the project manager for ELTeCs South Asian Project, 2002, which was the first project awarded Hornby Funding, explained the stages they had gone through while working on the project. Their project was a collaborative work among Pakistan, Malaysia and Sri Lanka which led to the publication of a book by OUP. Sabiha also talked about the hints to secure the bid proposal. Objectives have to be clear and in parallel with the ELTeCs mission.

All in all, the session has been very encouraging for TA's to consider developing joint projects.

Notes on Gavin Dudeney's talk by Jo Westcombe

Gavin Dudeney introduced a session on 'Making Websites and other e-tools work for us'

In this part of the Associates' Day Gavin wanted to introduce us to three kinds of tools available to a Teachers Association; (We)Blogs, Yahoo group email lists and websites. We looked at what each of them can do, before opening up the discussion to the merits of each and to members' experiences.

Blogs:

A Blog is a web-based diary, which thousands of people around the globe have discovered can offer them the chance to publish their thoughts, opinions and ideas on a regular basis on the internet. The software for setting one up is free, and apparently takes only a few minutes to learn how to use. In fact, writing in a Blog is as easy as writing your text in a window and clicking a button. Gavin suggests that students can publish their journals in this way. More information about blogs can be found in Graham Stanley's articles in Voices (April/May 2004) and the IATEFL Computer SIG Journal (February 2004).

Yahoo Groups:

The IATEFL PAL (Partners and Associates List) list is one of these, and basically functions as a mailing list. Such a group has other features too however, for example a Chat facility, file sharing, access to links, as well as database, polling and calendar functions. Such a list needs a list 'mother' or 'father' to monitor the goings on, intercept potential infiltrators (for example commercial outfits) and occasionally to send out reminders to people not to send messages intended for one person to the whole list! This administrator can also turn on and off certain functions, e.g. whether attachments can be sent or not.

Websites:

After all his hard work on building the Associates WebPages, it must have been hard for Gavin to hear that only one of us was a regular visitor. No doubt things will change on that front, as we begin to share ideas and articles. One member of the discussion said that their organisation had approached students, who had been happy and competent to do the job of setting up a website. Another

member had asked a local webdesigner, who had done the job free of charge, but had his own advertisements on the site. The organisation I am part of, MELTA Germany, has a website at www.melta.de which both members and non-members value highly. Please have a look if you are in need of ideas. Duncan Baker at IATEFL (duncan@lydbury.co.uk) has also given workshops for German ELTAs on building websites, which I can recommend.

Margit raised the important point that as we are part of so many professional 'circles', for example our own teaching environment, projects we are part of, local TA's, IATEFL and other professional organisations, it is easy to be swamped by email. I think the general feeling of the Associates group was that it was a good idea to use the Associates pages and our page in 'IATEFL Voices' to keep everyone informed and to keep in touch with particular people as necessary, rather than setting up yet another email list for the Associates.

Thank you to Gavin for keeping us up to speed on these issues.

Notes on Jenny Johnson's talk by Alison Taylor

Jenny said the 14 Special Interest Groups are "at the heart of IATEFL" – and often the way that people become involved. She then discussed collaboration between Associates and SIGs and outlined the advantages for both of them. SIGs have at least one event a year and these are often outside the UK. Because Associates often have their own events, the possibilities for collaboration are great.

The advantages for SIGs:

- More events outside the UK
- Learning about local contexts
- Meeting "real" teachers
- Possible collaboration with newsletters

The advantages for Associates:

- More international speakers (international Call For Papers)
- More international participants
- Use of English as the language of communication throughout
- Sharing/learning/networking
- Increased contacts for EU/ELTECs projects

As the number of SIGs in Associate member organisations is unknown at present, it is hoped that a list will be drawn up via the website.

Notes on Simon Fenn's talk by Gyongyi Vegh

What is the WMS?

- Aims: to offer membership of international IATEFL at a locally reasonable rate to associates through a scholarship fund, which is limited
- Sources of the fund: endowment; individual donations; donations from organisations, e.g. Hornby Trust, teacher associations, etc.
- The fund is managed by a committee which meets two times a year to decide how to allocate the funds (upcoming deadline: end of April)
- Procedure: associates send their bids to the committee → committee takes into account the UN human development index of the country each associate is from to

set the locally reasonable membership rate → the fund is used to top up the difference

- If the bid is successful, the WMS runs for 2 years
- Each associate can use a set number of WMS memberships within this term – if the number is not used up, the number will be lower in the next term or the associate will have to bid for a higher number again
- 10% of international IATEFL members get support through the fund – this figure could be higher

“It’s a wonderful scheme, especially in a country like Pakistan. We get *Voices* and know about what’s happening in the world.” - Zakia Sarwar, Pakistan

What are the plans for the future?

- To run the scheme as it has been going on for 5 years
- Considering individual WMS – would be a direct link with international IATEFL if someone is not an associate member or there is no associate or teacher association in their country

Notes on the talk by Martin Eayrs and Mojca Belak by Anna Martinovic

During the IATEFL Associates’ Day, held in Liverpool on April 13, 2004, Martin Eayrs, editor of ‘Voices’, and Mojca Belak, from IATEFL Slovenia, gave a brief workshop entitled: “TA Newsletters: Ways of getting contributions”.

The aim of Martin’s session was threefold: to meet the editor, to learn more about ISSUES, and to open up discussion. It was, indeed, a pleasure to meet the editor of ISSUES. I believe I speak for other attendees, by saying that I found Martin’s open and friendly manner both refreshing and delightful.

Martin talked briefly about the content of ISSUES. The content includes areas such as: talkback, feature articles, regular columnists, letters to the Editor, IATEFL announcements, SIG news, links with Associates, coming events, and WHO’s WHO in IATEFL. Associates were reminded to keep the Editor up-to-date regarding their organization’s contact person and web-site.

A brief discussion was held concerning the submission of articles. Articles that are creative and give a new angle on EFL teaching are given priority. Specialized articles are not preferred as we have to keep in mind that ISSUES is a newsletter, not a journal. Details as to the length of texts can be found in any issue.

Articles can be submitted to Martin Eayrs at the following address: P O Box 710, Lancaster, LA2 02Y, United Kingdom. Or at Martin’s e-mail address: martin@eayrs.com

Mojca Belak, the IATEFL Slovenian representative, gave an interesting talk on how to edit a newsletter. When Mojca took over as editor of ‘IN’, she tried to brainstorm new ways of improving the Slovenian newsletter. She thought that it was important to add a light-hearted touch so that teachers would be interested in reading it. A way to improve communication within the organization was to introduce “Who is Who” in the local IATEFL. Introducing local leading people involved in ELT, as well as abroad, would be another important feature. Furthermore, bringing in news from the home branch, in addition to other IATEFL branches, would expand the newsletters horizons. Lastly, it was important to keep in mind that the focus of any newsletter is to share teaching ideas and connecting ELT teachers in the country.

These ideas Mojca put into action in the following ways: Committee members were introduced individually, that is, one per issue. A short piece was written about what they do

and where they teach. An interview section was also introduced where the interviewees are well known people in the ELT world - with preference given to professionals in Slovenia. This interview is usually two pages long and includes a flattering picture. An "imported" article from IATEFL 'ISSUES', or from another IATEFL newsletter is also included along with reports from workshops, seminars, conferences and summer schools. These reports have practical tips and ideas that teachers can use in the classroom. Another interesting idea that is included in the newsletter is a section on students' self-reflection on teaching practice. In order to keep a light-hearted touch, jokes and anecdotes are included. Finally, a new look was added to the newsletter by changing the front page - a glossy, colour picture.

Mojce discussed some well-known problem areas such as finding sponsors, dealing with advertisers and the financial side of maintaining a newsletter. Technical details include defining the required length of articles, desktop publishing, and copyright laws. Meeting the deadline is a problem that all editors must deal with.

The session ended with the distribution of 'IN', the IATEFL Slovenia newsletter. We were all impressed with its content and layout. It was quite a useful workshop. Thanks to both Martin and Moyce for a job well-done.

Notes on Summary Session by Simon Fenn

At the end of the day there was a short review of the issues covered. The following additional points arose:

Insider & Outsider Perceptions

Participants were reminded about Ana Falcao's questionnaire: any responses welcome. It can be found on the IATEFL PAL website.

ELTeCS Bids

It was agreed that two ideas that had been discussed during the day might make good candidates for ELTeCS funding: an articles bank for TAs' newsletter editors and a seminar for these editors.

Sponsorship/funding

Sylvia Andernovics would lead discussion on the PAL site in the weeks following the conference to bring together ideas, tips, contacts etc contributed by Associates.

Collaboration between TAs

NATECLA and JALT, from different perspectives, share an interest in teaching mature students and seek links with other associates with this interest (rather than the more common young learners).

Websites

Associates should put links on their sites to the IATEFL Associates' site (not to other associates directly).

Wider Membership Scheme

The door is still open for another few days for associates to put in late bids for support this year. The door is always open for associates who want to offer support as donors!

I A T E F L

I A T E F L

I A T E F L

I A T E F L